THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes Sir, Government have seen press reports to this effect.

(b) Government closely monitors and continuously assesses all developments with regard to Pakistan's nuclear and missile capabilities. Government remains fully committeed to taking all necessary steps to effectively safeguard India's security and national interests in accordance with its own threat perceptions.

(c) and (d) India is committed to exercise strict civilian control over it nuclear assets. India has standard safety procedures and practices for the manufacture, transportation, storage and use of stores containing explosive substances and for the handling of the nuclear materials. The system of civilian control and technical management of nuclear assets is updated, as and when required, in the light of contemporary needs.

Eviction of Pak occupied Kashmir

1567. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether efforts are being made by Government to get back Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK);

(b) if so, the total Indian territory now under Pakistan occupation; and

(c) the details of the various efforts made by Government to get back POK?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) The entire state of Jammu & Kashmir is an integral part of the Indian Union. An area of approximately 78,000 sq kms. is under Pakistan's illegal and forcible occupation. Government are committed to resolving all issues with Pakistan through peaceful negotiations and direct bilateral dialogue.

Open skies agreement with USA

1568. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US Government is looking forward to negotiate the open skies agreement with India and to increase economic cooperation as

told by US Under Secretary of State, while recently addressing a Confederation of Indian Industry meet in Delhi;

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) in which field the economic development is expected?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTERY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) During the inter-governmental talks held in November 1999, the Government of USA had proposed an open sky agreement with India. As there were differences in views on certain substantive aspects, no agreement could be reached. India has already an open sky policy for cargo operations.

(c) Economic cooperation is expected to strengthen further in areas such as information and communications technology, energy and infrastructure, manufacturing, insurance, etc., following recent economic reforms and liberalization.

Visit of British Chief of Defence Staff to Pakistan

1569. SHRI C. M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to Britain's recent reported decision to sent its Chief of Defence Staff to Pakistan on an official visit;

(b) if so, what are the information with the Government about the purpose and outcome of the visit, in terms of improvement in UKPak relations; and

(c) how it is likely to influence the peace and security of this region?

THE MINISTAR OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The British Government has stated that the purpose of General Guthrie's visit to Pakistan was to sent a message to the present regime in Pakistan, with regard to the need for a clear time-table for restoration of democracy in Pakistan. It was also reported that Pakistan was urged to ensure that support to cross-border terrorism in Kashmir is discontinued.

(c) The Government is of the view that all efforts aimed at restraining the Pakistani regime from pursuing its policy of crossborder terrorism in Jammu